

Mi - PACA

*Michigan's Political Action
Committee for Animals*

September 7, 2016

House Local Government Committee
Anderson House Office Building
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representatives:

As Michigan's only bipartisan political action committee for companion animals, we are contacted quite often by voters who want help addressing animal welfare issues in their communities. We are most often contacted about issues in public animal shelters and issues of discrimination against dog owners.

Mi-PACA represents thousands upon thousands of Michigan voters who support the passage of SB 239.

Our voting bloc members across the state ask you to vote in support of SB 239, which passed the Senate with overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle.

The passage of Senate Bill 239 in October moved Michigan far along the road to protecting our pets and putting an end to legislation in our state that discriminates against dog-owning citizens.

Although SB 239 will allow local governments to continue to pass common-sense animal control laws within their jurisdictions, it would make Michigan a model of consistency and fairness by prohibiting them from enacting and enforcing laws that ban certain dogs by their breed or appearance. As it stands now, Michiganders who own certain breeds aren't even able to move freely about our beautiful state without fear of being arrested, ticketed or their dogs seized and possibly killed.

One of the arguments advanced against SB 239 is that it removes so-called "local control" from municipalities by imposing one standard across our state. Not only do we believe that this move toward consistency and fairness across Michigan is one of the law's virtues, we believe that arguments about local control only dodge the real issues at play here.

To counter this argument, you don't have to look any further than the Michigan State Constitution to find a number of examples of the state's supremacy over municipalities in certain matters. In our Constitution, we find, among other provisions:

- State supervision of local schools
- State supervision of local elections
- The emergency manager law used by the state to impose fiscal controls over local governments
- Limits on the eminent domain power of local government

In fact, the very structure of local government itself is prescribed by our state Constitution. This is as it should be, and that means that the state has every interest in blocking municipalities from passing arbitrary, discriminatory and ineffective laws that are virtually unenforceable.

The only argument that's left in favor of these discrimination laws, after removing local control from our opponents' decision-making process, is that these laws make Michiganders safer. Study after study has shown that nothing could further from the truth. In fact, in some studies, dog bites increased after the passage of breed discrimination ordinances. That's why a host of national organizations, including the American Kennel Club, the American Veterinary Association, the American Bar Association, the Centers for Disease Control, the ASPCA and the White House, have made public statements against breed discrimination and in favor of breed neutral laws.

Dog owners in Michigan deserve the right to be treated fairly in every city, village and township in our state. Ending breed-specific legislation, as 20 other states have done, and Making Michigan Next would do precisely that while allowing local governments to focus on regulations that place the onus where it should be: on irresponsible owners and specific dogs that display specific behaviors.

Thank you for your time and for your YES vote on Senate Bill 239.

Michigan's Political Action Committee for Animals
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